



The Chapels Royal of St Peter ad Vincula and St John the Evangelist

HM Tower of London

Dear friends,

When I arrived at the Tower before 9.00 am last Sunday, I spotted one of the Yeoman Warders wearing Tudor State Dress – bright scarlet and gold. As the name suggests, this is the uniform worn by the Yeoman Body for state occasions. I confess to having had a moment's panic: had I forgotten that there was a State Parade? If so, what could the occasion be? I then saw other YWs wearing their everyday Blue Undress. What was going on? The answer, it transpired, was that between 09.00 am and 11.00 am that day, the Tower was open only for certain visitors. Three or four times a year the Tower of London offers such a 'Relaxed Morning' for neurodivergent and learning-disabled children and their families. This provides two hours free from crowds, including entry to the Tower, the Crown Jewels, and relaxed and Special Educational Needs programming led by disability-aware contractors and facilitators. The event is designed to ensure a comfortable experience for families with neurodivergent or learning-disabled children, including those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism, Anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Tourette's, and other sensory and processing difficulties. Ticketing is limited to 1500 people, and access considerations are made to ensure that families can enjoy the Tower without loud sound effects, distracting music or harsh lighting. This seems to me to be a wonderfully humane way of accommodating such visitors and their families and/or carers, who can easily feel embarrassed at normal visiting times if their charges make noises which are inappropriate or loud – often both. The fact that these two hours were just for them meant that everyone could relax; any unconventional behaviour would be understood and tolerated by the others as all would be familiar with the occurrence.

As a society, we may still have some way to go before such people are universally welcomed but there has been much progress in my lifetime. Historic Royal Palaces are to be congratulated on their bold and thoughtful approach. In the same spirit, a cinema near us offers morning 'screaming screenings' at which parents with young babies, who might never otherwise get to the pictures, are able to do so in the knowledge that everyone else present also has a little one who may at any moment try to set a decibel record. Whether it is really necessary for cinemas to offer dog-friendly sessions (I am not making this up), I have my doubts, but for some people such events will be welcome. What all of these initiatives have in common is a healthy, tolerant and, we might say, Christian desire to accommodate those with differences – whether these be neurological or societal. Accommodation may be interpreted as inclusion. Let's find ways of enabling everyone to enjoy what we enjoy, without their feeling self-conscious or anxious.

And why the State Dress last Sunday? It turns out that several of the Yeoman Warders were wearing variants of their uniform so that the special visitors could see them (which they normally would not do) and ask questions about them – again, without their families or carers feeling embarrassed. I'm glad I asked.

With all good wishes and blessings,

Cortland.

The Gallantry Medallists' League

On Friday 18 and Saturday 19 September, before setting off for a family gathering in Sri Lanka, Canon Roger Hall attended the biennial muster of the Gallantry Medallists' League (GML), for whom he acts as their Padre. The UK Honours and Awards system recognises distinguished acts of bravery or gallantry of the highest order by members of the civil community and the uniformed services. Recipients will have selflessly placed themselves in jeopardy to protect or save lives and property, often with little concern for their own safety. The GML counts amongst its members people who have performed extraordinary acts of bravery, from facing down terrorists to disarming explosive devices, often at the cost of significant personal injury, whether physical, mental or both. Roger counts it as one of his greatest privileges to be associated with these heroes and to preach at their muster service. This year, members met in York where on the Saturday they had their service of remembrance in the Minster, attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Yorkshire. That evening they had dinner in the ancient Merchant Adventurers' Hall, where they were addressed by the Lord Mayor of the City of York. Here you can see this year's muster outside and inside the Minster.



Service details for Sunday 4th October 2026
The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

0930 Holy Communion,
Chapel of St John the Evangelist, White Tower

Readings

1 Corinthians 1:4-8 and Matthew 22:34-end

Collect for The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

LORD, we beseech thee, grant thy people grace
to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil,
and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee the only God;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Poem of the week: *The Wild Swans at Coole*, by William Butler Yeats, 1917

The great Irish poet W B Yeats wrote this poem at the height of the First World War. The Coole Estate in County Galway was the country seat of his benefactress, Lady Gregory. Yeats believed that an enlightened aristocracy, which she epitomised for him, was vital to the future of Ireland; this made even more poignant the death of her only son Major Robert Gregory of the Royal Flying Corps. (Yeats wrote the poem *An Irish Airman Foresees His Death* in his memory.) Yeats had been a regular guest at Coole for years and Robert's recent death, threatening the extinction of the Gregory family line, perhaps led him to reflect here on the passing of time and the impermanence of things.

This is, as the first line indicates, an autumn poem. The poet is writing at the eve of the day, so that the end of the brightest season and the end of daylight are combined. Darkness is inexorably drawing in. Autumn does bring beauty, to which he can respond, but his appreciation of that beauty is melancholic. From the end of the first stanza his focus is on the swans. We may imagine that the grounds of this country house are well-tended but, by contrast, the swans are wild.

Yeats hints at the way in which we aim to impose order on our surroundings and on our lives – but these creatures are beyond the ability of humans to exert control. They swim or fly as they please. Whilst he can describe them as 'brilliant creatures', still his heart is sore. We infer that life's blows have saddened him. He may have suffered the vicissitudes of human existence (most recently the death of his friend) but the wild swans, untroubled, go about their business: 'Their hearts have not grown old.' We may sense from the final line that the poet feels the precariousness of all that he holds dear and is aware of the impermanence of things. Those brilliant creatures may simply decide to fly away and not return.

That this poem is suffused with sadness does not detract from its potency. Although it was written nearly 110 years ago, we feel its force still. Like the best writing, it is timeless.



W B Yeats in 1911

The Wild Swans at Coole

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trode with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

W B Yeats (1865-1939)

Jigsaw

By way of a tribute to the Yeats's poem about Coole, this week's jigsaw is of swans on the water at sunset.
The jigsaw can be found at: <https://www.jigsawplanet.com/?rc=play&pid=39e087394567>



Prayers

Please continue to remember those on our sick list, some of whom are very ill, amongst whom we name: Louise, Rob, Kofi, Nick, John, Chris and Howard.

RIP George Bush (Priest), and Josephine Sztyber.

Please continue to pray for peace in Ukraine and the countries of the Middle East:

God of peace and justice, we pray for the people of Ukraine and the Middle East today.

We pray for peace and the laying down of weapons.

We pray for all those who fear for tomorrow,
that your Spirit of comfort would draw near to them.

We pray for those with power over war or peace,
for wisdom, discernment, and compassion to guide their decisions.

Above all, we pray for all your precious children, at risk and in fear,
that you would hold and protect them.

This we pray in the name of Jesus, the Prince of peace. Amen.

With best wishes to all, Cortland.



Assistant Priest
The Chapels Royal
HM Tower of London
Deputy Priest in Ordinary to HM the King
cortland.fransella@hrp.org.uk

Our Safeguarding Officer

Anna Kimber, Deputy Governor and Head of Operations, HM Tower of London: Anna.Kimber@hrp.org.uk Telephone: 07785 954549.

Donations to the Chapel

We are always grateful for financial contributions to help us in our work. If you would like to support the Chapels Royal, HM Tower of London by setting up a Standing Order, making a one-off donation to Chapel Funds or setting up a Direct Debit, this is how to do it.

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

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Account number: **00027597**

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Thank you again for your generosity.

The HM Tower of London Chapels Royal Foundation



Standing Order

Standing Order

If you have an online banking facility, you should be able to use that to set up a Standing Order with the information in the box below. If not, please complete the form and send it to your bank.

To: The Manager, _____ *[Name of your bank]* *[Address of bank]* *[Address of bank]* *[Sort code]* _____ *[Account No.]* _____ of
Please remit £ _____ to the account detailed below commencing on
_____ *[date]* and monthly / annually *[delete one]* until further notice.

[Signature] _____ *[Date of signing]* _____

Use the information below to set up online, or return the completed form to your bank.

Please remit to: CAF Bank plc	Sort code	40-52-40
	Account number	00027597
	Account name	The HM Tower of London Chapels Royal Foundation
	Reference	<i>[your initials and surname]</i>

The HM Tower of London Chapels Royal Foundation



Gift Aid

Charity Gift Aid Declaration – Multiple donations

Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is required to identify you as a current UK taxpayer. In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below.

☐

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Please post, or return to:

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or send as an e-mail attachment to:

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